

Discussion Topics and Questions to Ask a Mentor

Career-related questions

1. What are the various jobs available in this field?
2. What types of training do companies offer those who enter this field?
3. In what ways is your occupation changing?
4. How is the economy affecting this industry?
5. What is the employment outlook like in your career field? How much demand is there for people in this career?
6. How quickly is the field growing?
7. What are the growth areas of this field?
8. What is a typical career path in this field or organisation?
9. What are the advancement opportunities?
10. How rapidly do people move to the next level in this career?
11. What are the typical entry-level job titles and functions?
12. What entry-level jobs offer the best opportunities for learning?
13. What trends in the field would be most likely to affect someone just entering this career now?
14. What kinds of people experience the greatest success in this field?
15. What is the most important thing someone entering this career field should know?

Job-focused questions

1. Could you describe one of your typical workdays?
2. What skills are required in your position on a day-to-day basis?
3. What parts of your job do you find most challenging?
4. What do you find most enjoyable?
5. Are there any negatives to your job?
6. How many hours do you work in a typical week?
7. What is the typical entry-level salary in this field?
8. What are the salary ranges for higher levels in this occupation?
9. What was your title when you first started working here?
10. Can you give an overview of the duties, functions and responsibilities of your job?
11. What percentage of your time is spent doing each function?
12. Is your job what you thought it would be when you started?

Company-focused questions

1. Why did you decide to work for this company?
2. What do you like most about this company?
3. How does your company differ from its competitors?
4. How optimistic are you about the company's future?
5. What does the company do to contribute to its employees' professional development?
6. What can you tell me about the culture of this company?
7. What's the dress code?
8. Does the company encourage and/or pay for employees to pursue graduate degrees¹³¹. Does the company offer an employee discount on the products it sells?
9. What is the typical job-interview process at the company? How many interviews do
10. What does the company do to foster innovation and creativity?

Future-focused questions

1. Do you have any recommendations about how I can prepare for and succeed in interviews in this industry?
2. Would you mind taking a quick look at my resume?
3. What professional organisations associated with this career should I join?
4. What kinds of experience, paid or unpaid, would you encourage for anybody pursuing a career in this field?
5. With the information you have about my education, skills, and experience, what other fields or jobs would you suggest I research?
6. What is the best way to obtain a position that will get me started in this occupation?
7. If you were conducting a job search today, how would you go about it?
8. What advice can you offer on how to progress in my career?

Academic questions

1. Does your work relate to any experiences or studies you had in university?
2. How well did your university experience prepare you for this job?
3. What courses have proved to be the most valuable to you in your work?
4. What courses do you wish you had taken that would have better prepared you?
5. If you were a university student again, what would you do differently to prepare for this job?
6. How important are grades or GPA for obtaining a job in this field?
7. What do you feel is the best educational preparation for this career?
9. If you were entering this career today, would you change your educational preparation in any way to better facilitate entry?
10. Can you recommend any courses I should take?
11. What are the educational requirements for this job?
12. What other types of credentials or licenses are required?
13. Is graduate school recommended? An MBA?

Changing careers questions

1. My current career is [job title]. How easy or difficult do you think it might be to make a transition from that career to your career?
2. The skills I use the most in my current career are [skill] and [skill]. To what extent and in what ways do you think those skills are transferable to your career?
3. What aspects of my background do you feel would be the most helpful in making the transition to your career field?
4. What skills needed in your career field do you think someone in my current career might be lacking and might need to develop?
5. What would be the best kind of training to get to make the transition from my current career to your career?
6. The things I like the best about my current career are: [] Will I find some of those same things if I switch to your career?
7. The things I dislike the most about my current career are: [] Will I encounter any of those same challenges in your career?
8. Do you know of any other people in your career who have made the transition to your field from my current career or a career similar to my current career? How did the transition work out?
9. Knowing what you know about your career field, and knowing what I would have to do to get into this field, do you think you would make the change if you were me?
10. Could you take a brief look at my resume and suggest ways I could tailor it to make myself more marketable in changing from my current career field to your career field?